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SUBJ: MEDIA REACTION: OBAMA'S FIRST YEAR

¶1. SUMMARY: Nepal's state-owned English daily, The Rising Nepal (circulation: 5,000), on Monday, January 18 published an OP-ED piece titled "Obama's first year in the White House," by a journalism professor and former chief editor of the paper. The piece analyzed President Obama's first year as the U.S. President and the steps he had taken to address the economic crisis, health care and foreign policy and called it "generally positive."

¶2. EXCERPTS: "Barack Obama, the U.S. President, has just completed his first year as the presiding occupant of the White House. The euphoria with which his victory in the 2008 November presidential polls was greeted is being gradually assessed in a more detached manner. This is usually the case with any president."

¶3. "...Obama, 47, intends to be not only the man of the moment but also a respected figure in history. It may be recalled how his body language spoke after his poll triumph weeks before actually taking over the White House key from outgoing President George Bush. Expectations were high from the American public, in particular, and the rest of the world audience, in general. The global economic recession got splattered all over the place, and the world's No. 1 economy was deeply affected. The task was to tide over the crisis at the earliest possible, and ease the hardships suffered by the people in general. This was easier said than done and yet it was a task the newly sworn-in president had to strive for accomplishment."

¶4. "The crisis is far from over, but the general assessment of the Obama administration's initiative to deal with it has been satisfactory. His health services reform program has made a significant stride. People have decided to hold their patience with many other issues chiefly because Obama has barely completed his first year and has not committed any major blunder so far. So they would like to give him the benefit of the doubt that he will translate into practice what he has set out to deliver. These concern domestic policies."

¶5. "On the foreign policy front, the issues are complex. Yet it was a personal boost for the President that the Nobel Peace Prize Committee decided to award him the 2009 edition of the coveted prize... Washington has a withdrawal plan in Iraq. In keeping with the schedule, most troops in 2009 were stationed outside populated areas."

Washington's assessment is that Al-Qaeda's presence in Iraq has considerably weakened and that it was trying to find a base elsewhere. ... How the Al-Qaeda spreads its tentacles is indicated by its recent activity in Yemen where the group appears to have developed a network... "

¶6. "...Yemen might be the next country where Washington will focus greater attention, though it is too early to ascertain the extent such attention will merit. ...Next door Cuba might also be in the Obama administration's signal for some kind of engagement. Cuba's non-inclusion in the 34-year-nation summit of the Americas last year was a sort of embarrassment, considering that many of the summiteers wanted Havana's presence ..."

¶7. "In conclusion, the Obama administration has taken a number of initiatives that have generally sent positive messages in the past 12 months. Next winter marks the mid-term, by which time more action and substantive results will be expected."

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